PICTURE IMAGINATION BOOK

七ツ風の島物語

公式ガイドブック

Keita Amemiya talks about
Nanatsu Kaze no Shima Monogatari

What was it that Amemiya Keita, the original author and general director of Nanatsu Kaze no Shima Monogatari, wanted to convey through his video game? We asked him to talk about it while looking back at his childhood memories.

The work *Ihō kenmonroku* (Diary of a Foreign Land) which served as the motif for *Nanatsu Kaze no Shima Monogatari* is a piece that I have been working on for over 20 years as my life's work. I first imagined Gaupu's world when I was still in high school. Actually, when I was about 8 years old, there was a time when I had the habit of imagining things a little just before going to sleep at night. I would envision a place like an empty island where I'd be alone and build a secret base or a bridge. One day it was a bridge, the other day it was a fence or something like that. Then aliens or monsters would attack the island I was on and I would protect the island from such dangers. I was a simple kid like that, and I would imagine and play in fantasy worlds almost every day. However, before I realised it, I had forgotten this habit.

The next time I started it again was when I was in high school. I suddenly remembered a drawing I had made when I was about 8 years old, and started again. At that time, I came up with the idea of a world without any humans, where creatures we'd never seen before lived. After that, the characters Gaupu and Kisuke appeared and then it became a world that has continued to expand from time to time ever since. I came up with the name Gaupu when I was in high school. At the time, Gaupu didn't have the same style as he appears in the game, he looked more like a lizard. I imagined a story about a professor named Gaupu who was an adventurer and traveled all over the place.

There is a world with a dual structure: the world where Gaupu lives is deserted and has few living creatures, and another world where there was a civilization in the past and there are many uncommon creatures. Gaupu is traveling and writing a novel in which a creature called a scissor rat manifests itself from his imagination. However, he happens to discover this other world and when he goes there he finds that there is a scissor rat - the creature called Mi actually existed. When I was in high school, I thought up stories like that and drew a lot of pictures of them.

I grew up in Urayasu, which is near the sea. I also have a farm. I catch snakeheads and crayfish in the fields and rivers. I often used to walk by the ocean. The water is shallow and you can go all the way out to sea, so you can explore on foot - it can be quite nerve-wracking. As the tide comes in, the water beneath your feet disappears and you can see jellyfish swimming around. Looking back, it was certainly a great place to play as a child. There weren't many cars there, either.

When I was in high school, I was really interested in picture books and stuff, and I thought that I might be able to compile the world of Gaupu in the form of a fairy tale or something like that so that I could expand it as I grew up. However, at that time, there was a band boom, and music and sports players were popular. There was an atmosphere that it was uncool to want to be a picture book author, so I only showed my drawings to really close friends.

A while ago, a certain animation production company had a plan to make an animation of *Ihō kenmonroku*. I wrote the plot and did the character design with the producer. I think it was around the year 1990. The characters that appear in *Nanatsu Kaze No Shima no Monogatari* are almost the same as those from Ihō kenmonroku, except that Kurion's name is Gringle and the three who travel with Gaupu are Kisuke, Rokuzū, and Gringle. In short, Kisuke and Rokuzū are each a tool in the world they live in. Whether it's Scissor Mouse or Propeller Rabbit, their abilities are the abilities of their tools, and they live by helping each other out. For example, when they want to cut something, they ask Kisuke, and when they want to get something that's high up, they ask Gringle. However, for some reason, in that region, Kisuke's ability to cut (help people) is not very useful. That's why the boy named Kisuke has scissors in his hands.

The illustrations I published in *Ihō kenmonroku* were based on stories I imagined at that time. Also, when I went professional and entered drawings in contests, I usually drew characters from the world of Gaupu.

I was a bully when I was a child (laughs). Actually, I liked both. I liked playing with a lot of friends, and I liked making all kinds of things with clay by myself.

He feels ashamed of himself for being such a jerk. That's the story of how Kisuke meets Garpu and learns how to use scissors on the journey. At the time, there were some opinions that the characters, for the time, were not suitable material for children. I myself had no intention of changing the characters and I thought that I might as well do it when I could, so in the end the idea was shelved.

I've done a few game-related jobs up until now, but *Nanatsu Kaze no Shima Monogatari* was the very first game job that came to me, actually. Enix told me: "we'll leave all the content up to you". When I heard that, the first thing that came to my mind was: "does that mean I have to do it all?" or, rather, "do I have to lead everyone to the very end, otherwise the project won't be completed?".

Actually, I'm the type of person who easily gets bored (bitter smile). It's quite hard to work on something that takes more than a year. It takes quite a long time to make a movie, so it can be a bit frustrating. I'm impatient, or rather, my interests change quite easily.

So I wondered if I could complete the game. But I also thought that if it was something I've always been interested in, and if it was a subject I liked, it would be fine. Moreover, if it was an original world of my own, something I hadn't yet shaped into a work, I would never give up halfway through. So I decided to use the concept I originally developed for *Ihō kenmonroku* as the subject for the game.
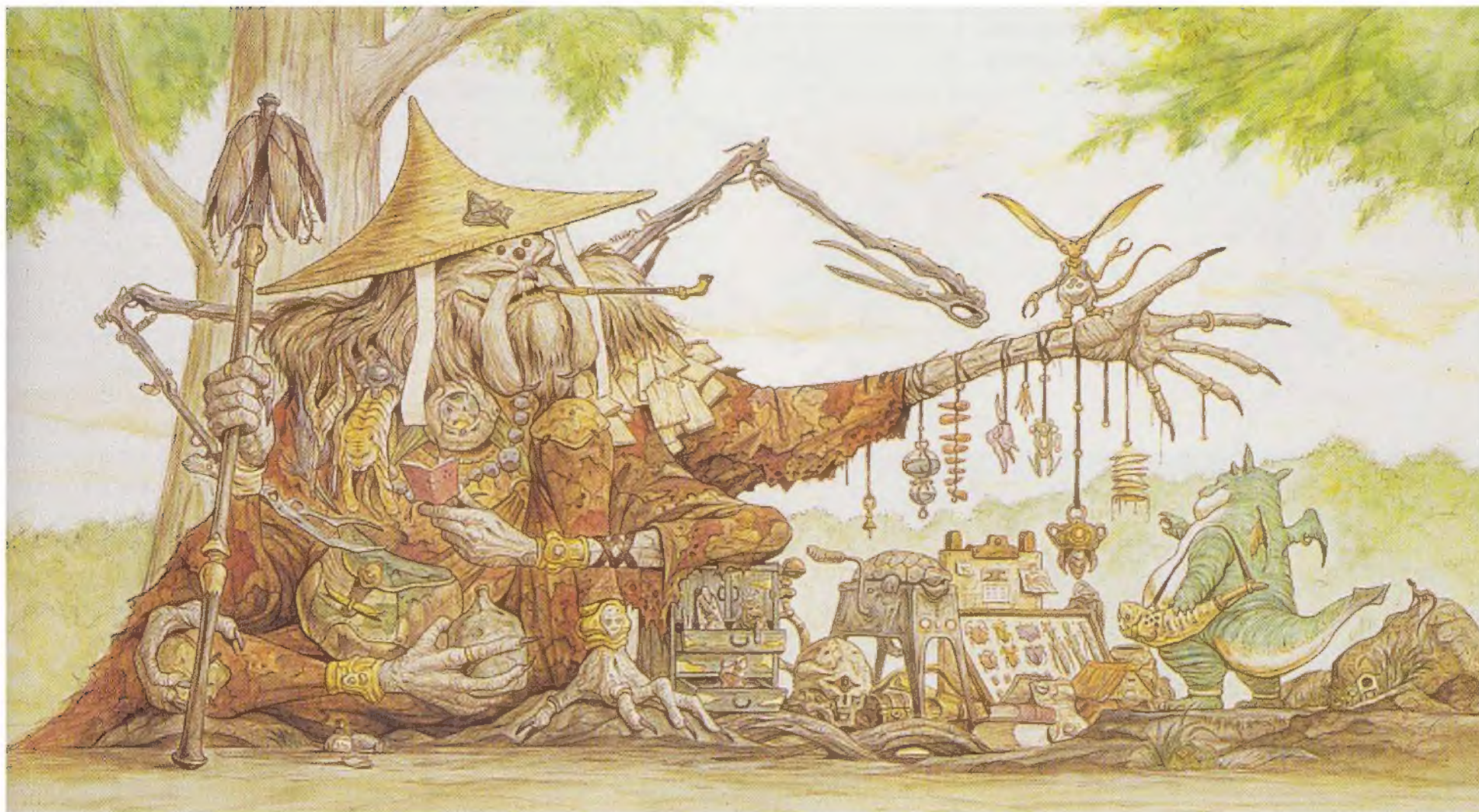
Honestly, it probably would have been easier to propose another project that I had in mind at the time, but I feel like I deliberately chose the most difficult material. All of the stories that appear in *Nanatsu Kaze no Shima Monogatari* were newly created specifically for the game.

Originally, *Ihō kenmonroku* and the world of Gaupu didn't really have stories with a clear beginning, development, twist, and conclusion. What I usually imagine is my everyday life, for example, when I run out of cigarettes and go to the tobacco shop but they don't have any, or when I hear a rumor from someone that there is a delicious wine and I end up going to town to buy two bottles - something like that. It's a world where Gaupu and strange creatures appear in such a small landscape. So there's no beginning, development, twist, or conclusion, or any big incidents happening, or anything like that.

kisuke

On the other hand, I deliberately thought up a story like that for the game. I wondered what kind of story could possibly take place in the world of Gaupu. I, myself, don't really think about it that way unless I need to for work that I do (laughs).

The conclusion that was reached wasn't anything grand such as defeating a certain demon king type villain, but rather a fairly straightforward story. One expects characters to move in games, right? But then this suggests a series of different challenges from an artistic standpoint. As such, depending on the character, there are some that are better off not moving. But even so, we had to somehow concretely show that Gaupu was next to those other characters on the screen. That was the most difficult part of working on it.

Also, when I thought of it as a game, the characters I had in mind were not really usable so many of them couldn't be made to appear in it. I guess that was reflected in the fish. The remaining characters, or so-called people or resident characters, are newly imagined ones that have been originally designed in larger numbers specifically for this game adaptation. In the case of games, unlike movies, there is a tendency to focus on giving it form. It's obvious, but all the points of discussion move towards things like whether it's a good game or it doesn't have enough capacity, and it seems like it's easy to lose sight of the point of whether the theme is being conveyed.

In *Nanatsu Kaze no Shima Monogatari* there were things that were less important in terms of their functional contribution to the game but that I decided to keep; and things that were fun to control using the gamepad but which I decided to leave out. I was most particular about conveying the message that I thought could only be conveyed through a game, and that could only be conveyed through the character Gaupu. If it indeed worked well in the end it was all due to the work performed by the team.

The designs of Gaupu and other characters have changed over time. In Gaupu's case, the only elements are horns, wings, body color, and beak. I didn't draw him with a specific style in mind. That's why he gets thinner and fatter depending on the time. Still, it's my feeling that his proportions in this game are pretty close to the final version. As for the live-action movie part, stop-motion photography takes time. Even if you keep the camera rolling all day, you can only get about 8 seconds of footage. On average, you can only get about 5 seconds of footage, and that continued for 40 days, which was the hardest part (laughs).

Actually, at first I didn't really want to include live-action footage. I didn't want to make it into a game that was just made by Keita Amemiya, so although the footage I shot is included, I didn't want to make that into a selling point. However, since it was okay to use it anywhere I wanted to, we decided not to use it as a gimmick in the opening or ending, but to use it in a place that is properly connected to the game. So we came up with the idea to make the 2D dream that Gaupu sees into a 3D live-action movie. Thanks to that, we were able to create it in a place that is deeply connected to the storyline, which I think was the best thing.

In terms of filming techniques, I didn't do anything particularly new. I just carefully made it using traditional techniques. So the highlight is that I didn't cut corners (laughs). It may sound strange to say this, but in this day and age when digital is at its peak, making everything by hand rather than relying on digital means is a rather luxurious approach. The reason I created the specimen box/cabinet is because I wanted the player who becomes Gaupu in the game to have something just for him when he comes home. It would be great if he could create something just for himself in the world of the game that is different from other players'. Of course, the decision of what to display in the cabinet is up to the player, and it doesn't interrupt the storyline. It's a truly luxurious part of the game.

Some people will decorate only with insects, while others will line up nine identical stones... In fact, this cabinet is designed so that something will happen depending on the combination and arrangement of the items you line up. The probability of this happening is very low, but if you simply line up the items in a staggered arrangement, or the same items, just like a normal person would when arranging things... if you line them up with a child's mind, you're sure to bump into something, so please have fun.

Also, the bug catching and fishing aspects are quite complex: for example, the elements that cause bugs to appear, and are quite deep, so please try catching lots of them and enjoy. That's my recommendation! (laughs)

The message I put into the game can be said in just five seconds. It's... if I say it here, then it's too easy! (laughs). How will you, the player, perceive that message upon finishing the game? Right now, I'm looking forward to your reactions.

Please take your time to enjoy the world of *Nanatsu Kaze no Shima Monogatari*.

~1997.10.02 (at Enix Co., Ltd. headquarters)~